

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

In complete response to the Office Action dated January 23, 2006, on the above identified application, reconsideration is respectfully requested. Claims 15, 17-26, and 28-30 are pending in this application.

With this amendment, claims 15, 24 and 25 are amended, claims 18 – 21 and 23 are cancelled, and claims 31 - 34 are added to further define the invention.

Allowable Subject Matter:

The Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 24, 25, and 28-30. As noted above, claims 24 and 25 are amended so as to remove the Markush type language. New independent claims 31-34 are added to incorporate this allowable subject matter.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103:

Claims 15, 17-19, and 21-23 currently stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Faerber (US 6,281,472) in view of Hermann (WO 02/43,918) and Banas et al. (US 4,000,392). The Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are not unpatentable over these combined references.

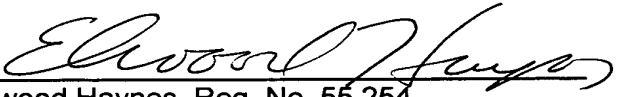
None of these references either teaches or suggests the **onsite production** of a shielding gas mixture by a **gas mixing means**, nor do they teach or suggest **controlling** the amount of helium in a shielding gas mixture by **controlling an onsite** gas mixing means. For this reason, a person of ordinary skill in the art would find no motivation to combine these references, and therefore, the Applicants respectfully contend that the basis for this rejection deserves reconsideration.

Claims 20 and 26 currently stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). Due to the aforementioned claim cancellations, the Applicants respectfully submit that these rejections are now moot.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is believed that the present application now stands in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe a telephone call would expedite the prosecution of the application, he is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

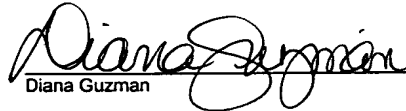

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Date: **May 23, 2006**

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 23rd day of May, 2006.


Diana Guzman